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Estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council

United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General

Background

1. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) was established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1401 (2002) for an initial period of 12 months. The mandate of the Mission was subsequently extended by the Security Council in its resolutions 1471 (2003), 1536 (2004), 1589 (2005), 1662 (2006), 1746 (2007), 1806 (2008), 1868 (2009), 1917 (2010), 1974 (2011), 2041 (2012) and 2096 (2013). Pursuant to its resolution 2145 (2014), the Council decided to extend the mandate of UNAMA until 17 March 2015.

2. The Presidential and provincial elections and the establishment of a new government, as well as the drawdown of international security forces, mark a critical and fragile stage in Afghanistan's transition. By the end of 2014, the formal process of security transition will have been completed and the mandate of the International Security Assistance Force will come to an end. Through December 2014, key elements of Afghanistan's future security architecture and international partnerships will be defined. The conclusion of the presidential elections and agreement on a national unity government, as well as the signing of a United States-Afghan bilateral security agreement for a future North Atlantic Treaty Organization transition mission, has lessened the immediate uncertainty. The formation and functioning of a national unity government will be significant tests of the sustainability of Afghanistan's transition and will provide the basis for a technical assessment of the role of UNAMA, which is expected to be carried out in the last quarter of 2014, subject to further developments on the ground.

3. During 2014, the political landscape was dominated by two rounds of presidential elections, on 5 April and 14 June, and to a lesser extent the provincial

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council elections on 5 April. Technical preparations for the elections were completed on schedule by the Independent Election Commission and the Electoral Complaints Commission. With no candidate gaining more than 50 per cent of the vote in the first round of the presidential election, a second round of polling was constitutionally required; it was contested by the two leading candidates. The second round was followed by a comprehensive electoral audit, launched at the request of the two candidates and the Afghan authorities, with technical advice provided by the United Nations. Following a protracted electoral-political crisis, on 21 September the Independent Election Commission announced a President-elect, who was sworn in on 29 September. It is expected that UNAMA will continue to play a critical role, through its good offices, in facilitating political processes and coordinating the provision of United Nations technical advice. A key element of this work will entail supporting efforts to restore confidence in Afghan processes and institutions.

4. Once the new government has established its priorities, including engagement with the international community, and in view of the ongoing security transition, a technical assessment is scheduled to be carried out in the last quarter of 2014. The technical assessment is subject to further developments in Afghanistan and will review the Mission's role and configuration, taking into account the priorities and expectations of the new government. The outcome of the assessment will be reflected in the next report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the situation of Afghanistan and will assist the Council in its deliberations on the mandate of the Mission beyond March 2015. The outcome of the assessment will also be reflected in the full budget proposal for 2015, to be submitted for consideration at the second part of the resumed sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly. The Council's considerations may address the future focus, scope and footprint of the Mission in the context of support to the consolidation of the transition.

5. With regard to the future role of UNAMA, the Mission's operations may change in 2015, subject to the views of the new Government of Afghanistan and the state of the security environment.

Security considerations for 2015

6. It is anticipated that the security environment will remain fragile and unpredictable during the first part of 2015. With the expected conclusion of the security transition, the focus of Afghan efforts, supported by international partners, will be on the capacity of the Afghan National Security Forces to prevent further erosion of the security environment by anti-government elements, support the legitimacy of the new government and provide a stable and secure environment for the parliamentary elections scheduled for 2015, and thereby enable government institutions and services to function. The combination of the threats posed by criminal activity and the illicit economy will continue to be of concern to the United Nations, particularly with regard to local power struggles over access to resources, which is expected to continue to fuel a complex and fluid conflict.

7. The activities of the United Nations are expected to continue to be affected by a set of security challenges similar to those seen in previous years. Preliminary assessments in the first half of 2014 indicate an increase in security incidents recorded by the United Nations as compared with 2013. Overall, an assessment has

been made that the current direct and indirect threats faced by the United Nations will remain consistent with the current security environment, with the attendant implications for access and delivery of the programmatic work of the United Nations. UNAMA, in consultation with the United Nations country team and Headquarters in New York, will continue to ensure that the current security apparatus and the accompanying risk mitigation strategies are in place to maintain compliance with the Organization's security policies and standards. Maintaining the safety and security of United Nations staff and their ability to conduct programmatic activities will remain a key priority throughout the strategic planning process in the coming period and may require further investment, contingent on developments in the security situation.

Interim resource requirements for 2015

8. Pending the decision of the Security Council on the future role of the Mission, and in view of the uncertainty associated with a number of planning assumptions, it is necessary to ensure that financial arrangements are in place to allow the Mission to continue for the first half of 2015 and for UNAMA to determine its actual requirements as the situation on the ground becomes clearer.

9. The total resources approved for UNAMA for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2014 amount to $191,364,500, and it is projected that expenditures for the same period will amount to $189,936,000. The anticipated unencumbered balance of $1,428,500 at the end of December 2014 reflects mainly a vacancy rate temporarily higher than budgeted, particularly for United Nations police, international staff and United Nations Volunteers in view of delayed deployment. Hence, an amount of $94,968,000 (net of staff assessment), representing a technical roll-over of 50 per cent of the level of projected expenditures during 2014, is proposed for the period from 1 January to 30 June 2015.

10. A detailed budget proposal for 2015 will be prepared and submitted for consideration during the second part of the resumed sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly. In the interim period, the Mission will be able to develop a comprehensive budget proposal, which will incorporate fully any decisions taken by the Security Council and will cover the full scope of UNAMA operations during 2015.

11. A request for action from the General Assembly in connection with these interim resource requirements for UNAMA is contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/69/363) on estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council.